

**Minutes of a joint work session of the Town Council with the School Department, School Building Committee and the Budget Committee held on March 21, 2011 in the Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 40 Commons, Little Compton, RI. The following were in attendance:**

**Town Council Members: Charles N. Appleton, Jr., Fred M. Bodington, III; Paul J. Golembeske, Gary S. Mataronas and Robert L. Mushen. Additionally for Council: Richard S. Humphrey, Town Solicitor; Tom Dunn, Business Manager, Lawrence Anderson, Town Moderator and Police Chief Wordell.**

**School Committee: David A Beauchemin, Donald T. Gomez, Joseph Quinn and Micah Shapiro. Absent: Lynn Brousseau Lebreux. Additionally for School: James Gibney, Principal, Kathryn Crowley, Superintendent and three (3) Architects from Durkee, Brown, Viveiros and Werenfels Architects.**

**School Building Committee: Tom Alder, Robert Mushen (Town Council rep.), Ben Guathier (Budget Committee rep.), BG Shanklin, David MacGregor, Donald Gomez (School Committee Chair), James Gibney (Principal), John Osborne (Custodian), Lynn Brousseau Lebreux (School Committee member), Margaret Manning (Parent), Mark Rapp (Parent), Micah Shapiro (School Committee member), Mike Steers (at large), Kathryn Crowley (Superintendent). Absent: Beryl Borden (Parent) and Dorie Freeman (Teacher)**

**Budget Committee Members: George Crowell, Ben Gauthier, Robert Goff, William Monahan and Scott Morrison.**

**General Assembly Members: Senator Louis DiPalma and Representative Dan Gordon.**

**Public: John Lint, Ruth Gauthier, Pat Hagan, Heather Steers, Roy Bonner, Kevin Healey, Roger Lord, Harry Hallgring, Ralph Watson.**

**A Power Point Presentation was given to all in attendance to give an overview of the status of the revitalization school building project being considered at this time. Don Gomez, Tom Allder, Kathryn Crowley and Ben Gauthier presented information regarding the project covering construction considerations, educational, health and safety issues, environmental improvements and the potential financial impact on the town budget. A full copy of the presentation may be found in the Town Council's records on this subject matter.**

**The Town Council Members interacted during the presentation to clarify concerns. Through those inquiries the following items were noted:**

- 1) Approximately 81% of the existing building will be remodeled, not new construction**
- 2) No additional staff is expected to be needed upon completion of the renovations/construction.**
- 3) The cafeteria, although located in a different location is not**

**overwhelming larger than its previous location**

**4) The larger square footage relates to the attempt to keep as much of the existing building as possible, thereby reducing the overall cost by remodeling vs. new construction**

**5) Simply installing sprinklers and an egress door in the cafeteria will not abate all of the deficiencies mandated to be upgraded**

**6) Displacement ventilation is being recommended which will allow for cost savings during remodeling and in the long term**

**7) Two scenarios compared for financial implications the present stage II application proposal vs. a Plan B which is a set of items deemed to be the items required for upgrade in order to bring the school into compliance with federal and state laws.**

**8) The deadline for inclusion on the May 17, 2011 Financial Town Meeting has already expired, therefore a Special Financial Town Meeting may need to be called. Some have suggested a referendum be put before the voters; this approach has not been utilized in the past. A final decision on how, if at all, this matter is voted upon will be decided by the Town Council.**

**Senator Louis DiPalma addressed the Council and stated that in his experience the Housing Reimbursement has never been defaulted upon and he believed it would be paid should the Council enter into a bond with a housing reimbursement clause. He also stated that he would serve on behalf of the Town in the Senate's consideration of the bond.**

**Representative Daniel Gordon noted that he has been in commercial construction for over 30 years. Listening to this evening's discussion he found himself developing several questions. He wondered how many and where would the field for the geothermal wells be located. He was told by the Architects that the field was in front of the school 50' apart and that it is expected to be 5 or 6 wells. He stated further that he would take his guidance from his constituency (the town) but cautioned that in his opinion the State is in a fiscal crisis and could very well go bankrupt. He would not guarantee the Housing Reimbursement will be paid and advised caution applying for bonds with the State of Rhode Island.**

**RIDE strongly suggests the Stage II application move forward by April 1st due to the fact that six (6) other cities have applications completed that will be considered by the Board of Regents. Councilor Mushen expressed concerns and simple facts as follows:**

- Many questions still remain unanswered, staging of the project, phasing, how will this effect the existing Brownell Library, effects if any on the relocation of the cafeteria to mention a few.**
- No discussion occurred regarding the "site" area of the project, strictly concerned with building at this meeting**
- Drop off site for students remains essentially the same as previous proposal. Some have concerns with this proposal and were told that a revision is being proposed to address those concerns**
- Reality is that the Town "must" upgrade the federal and state**

deficiencies or the school could be in danger of being found in violation

- What is the minimum cost to complete the mandatory needs?
- Is completing only the minimum items cost effective, will it result in a need to re-visit in 7 to 10 years?
- Once the project is completed, will the town be better stewards of our building?
- What is the legal position on the proposed Housing Reimbursement?
- Some residents will have a problem with any increase to taxes due to the current economy. The burden seems to be unavoidable in that the must address and correct the federal and state deficiencies.

Councilor Bodington asked if some of the choices made in the proposal will result in energy efficiency and cost savings. He was told that the geothermal system, displacement ventilation system and energy sensors are among many items that should result in cost savings for future maintenance and energy costs.

Larry Anderson, speaking as a citizen and not in his official Moderator capacity, expressed his displeasure with Rep. Gordon's statements of the pending bankruptcy of the State of Rhode Island and his advice not to seek a bond from the state. Mr. Anderson stated that there is state law formulating how the State is to reimburse towns on these types of bonds. Mr. Anderson noted that he has asked for a legal opinion to be obtained from an independent

third party on whether or not the reimbursement is legally bound to be paid by the state. He cautions that it may be a risk to delay or defer any work on the school

Mr. Anderson, speaking as Town Moderator reminded the Council that he believes the Home Rule Charter allows for either a Financial Town Meeting or a Referendum to be put before the voters. The Town Solicitor informed Mr. Anderson that the Council has already retained the anticipated services of Edwards and Angell as Bond Counsel who will address those issues.

Roy Bonner stated that the Tax Payers Association does not support this proposal and they will seek to defeat it should it be brought before the voters. Kevin Healey stated that there was a legislative amendment that allows the state to defer by three years housing reimbursement fees should the state have financial problems.

A brief volley of remarks occurred between Mr. Bonner and Tom Alder concerning the project needs and/or facts of some of the proposals. The Council President asked that no further comments be made on this matter between the two men. Mr. Lord commented on the subject and thanked Rep. Gordon for being honest on the States financial position then the matter was dropped.

A few comments were made as follows:

- Rep. Gordon stated that he intended that the town just exercise caution as no one can guarantee that the payments will be forthcoming.
- Joe Quinn cited RIGL 16-7-45 concerning state housing aid payments.
- David Macgregor a retired teacher feels the Council should look at the needs and let the money concerns work there way out.
- Ruth Gauthier feels the upgrades proposed for the library (Media Center) will be an asset to the community
- John Lint feels most of these questions could have been answered had individuals (specifically meant the Councilors) attended more of the building committee meetings.
- Councilors Mataronas and Appleton replied that they have attended some of the meetings, utilized the ability to view the taped sessions on Cox Communications or conferred with Councilor Mushen who is the Councils liaison to this committee
- Plan B as it is presently constituted does not incorporation educational needs, simply the health and safety issues
- Ralph Watson believes a budget should have been set before starting all of this process to place a limit on finances
- Don Gomez would like to move forward in some fashion, if not with this proposal then the school will need to immediately begin the necessary actions to remediate the current deficiencies
- Kevin Healey suggests Councilor Golembeske seek information regarding background history on the project by reading the RGB and JCJ reports

**Motion made by Councilor Bodington, receiving a second by Councilor Golembeske, voting in favor (Appleton, Bodington, Golembeske, Mataronas, Mushen): To adjourn at 10:25 PM.**

**Carol A. Wordell, Town Clerk**